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*Myths
of
The Year*

Basil Anderton

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IDYLLS OF THE YEAR



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IDYLLS OF THE YEAR

BY

BASIL ANDERTON, M.A.

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Author of

"Fragrance among Old Volumes."

O. ANACKER Ltd.

SOHO SQUARE, LONDON, W.

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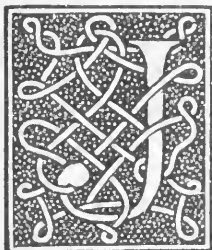
TO ,

MY WIFE

WHO KNOWS AND LOVES

THE COLOURS OF THE

COUNTRY



ANUARY has shown, in epitome, many of the aspects of the long new year. Frosts have been succeeded by balmy sunshine, snow by brown mud, wild winds from the west by soft southern airs, inert mist by squalls of rain and of biting sleet. There have been setting suns of richly changeful splendour, and great yellow moons that, as they rose, contracted to a silvery brilliance.

From the month's variety two days may linger awhile in the memory. Snow had fallen one night, and in the morning, looking down upon it, the eye ranged near and far over its whiteness. In the foreground, where the shadow of the neighbouring houses fell, it was just tinged with blue. Across the road the branches of trees showed black and definite, beyond their wont. Then came the open expanse, with the nearer rigs and furrows vanishing from sight in the sweep of the rising ground. The blue-grey of the shadows in

the furrow-bottoms, and the pink which, from a sunrise cloud, just tinged the rigs, merged further off into a light-filled, delicate tone of dull yellow. In the distance, banks of trees showed black, and white-roofed clusters of houses had walls of dark grey or of red. These gave the only strong and assured colour in what was else a wide harmony of ethereal tints. The sky just over the horizon was of palest yellow and green; then came a few hazy clouds of dull yellow, and above all the light blue of the clear upper air.

Next night the air grew warmer, and by the morning the white snow-mantle was gone, save that a hundred shreds and patches of it still lay in the dips and hollows of the open land. But the rising wind, out of the mild south at first, scattered even these shreds. Veering then to the west, it grew steadily in volume. It came hurtling and singing noisily through the tree-barriers that fringed the road as one fared northwards, plunging and leaping upon one at every brief gap. Routing out dead leaves by fifties and hundreds, whether from

quiet lurking-holes or from branches one had thought long stripped bare, it set them whirling and eddying over the roadway. When one turned aslant on to the open moorland, leaving behind the shrill screaming of the wires overhead and the dull half-music of the grinding tree-branches, forthwith it had one in its clutches : one must bend down sideways against it, forcing a devious path through its opposition. At first its rush was a little broken by the slope of the ground ; but beyond that it surged up with a renewed freedom and a madder joy. Then one faced into the very heart of it, from lust of its battle-play, fighting with it step after step, still plodding slowly forward, till at last the sheltering houses were reached and breath could be drawn at quiet ease once more.



FEBRUARY.



MIDST renewed wintry scenes by day, or when walking through white moonlight over wide-spread snow, it is pleasant to recall the promise of coming spring which certain days of February had brought. These days had drawn one afield once more to known haunts in far country lanes, and to fresh ramblings and investigations.

There is a quiet country road that runs for two miles or so, up and down, along the wide river's northern bank. Here the warm sun, in welcome contrast to the chilly south-east wind at your back, shines and flashes on the blue water down on the left. It is as though spring were before you, yet winter still at your heels. As the river comes curving from west and south you have long reaches of brilliant light. The steep sandy banks on your right are in the main grey and yellow and brown with bare wintry trees, with dead trailing grass, with clear patches of sand pierced by many

a black rabbit-burrow. Beech leaves add their vivid red and brown. Green bushes also and green trees are not wanting, to blend into the prevailing tints; for there are gorse and broom, there are blue-green fir trees and lustrous holly and ivy. Anon you find, aslant over the water, a dead trunk thickly grown with ivy; and you stand and listen gladly once more to the music of rustling leaves. There will be ere long many leaves a-whispering, instead of the few only that winter has not availed to silence. In the gardens of a few way-side cottages yellow crocuses are appearing, aglow with life amid the snow-drops' pale seniority; and even a luckless primrose has ventured into an unready world.

Leaving the river behind you, you will climb the long slope of the valley, past dark ploughed lands and yellow-grey grass fields, past brown hedges spotted with green buds, till you reach the highway running west. Meanwhile a slow grey mist has been creeping forward: the sun transmutes it into pale ethereal gold. But the gold fades, and the horizon and the lower sky grow vague and chill. The colour

that was spread abroad seems now recalled within the sun itself, which, as it sinks further into the whitening sea of mist, turns from gold to orange, from orange to red, and then almost to blood red. Thus you will see it through a fine lace-like tracery of branches as you pass a thicket of silver birches. Then the mist swallows up the sun, and the silent road and the fields grow white and still. Yet even now, when it would seem that winter's clutch o' the world is again secure, the new-welling life of springtide re-asserts itself. In this nearest field are a couple of sheep grazing, each with two busy lambs that now nibble a little grass, and now are vehement for milk, with tails a-wriggle.

Elsewhere, and on other days, the like contrast of old and new may be watched. You stand beside a wide stretch of heather, its purple-brown just deepened by the fading rays of the mist-baffled sun. Beyond the heather all colour is gone: grey mists reach far and wide, intersected only by the hedges that mark off field after field. In the distance a low hill of elfin still-

ness and pallor is crowned by a few lonely trees. Yet, if you look attentively, you will find red buds and brown, green buds and black, on the different trees and bushes near at hand. The air itself, too, a brief hour ago, was fragrant with the subtle perfume of spring.





ARCH, the last-born son of winter and the destined sire of spring, comes rushing in on the wings of the storm to claim his heritage. As his triple largess he scatters abroad snow, and sleet, and rain—gifts which, in earth's ancient economy, shall avail to harden and to nourish the on-coming plants and the bourgeoning trees. A tireless huntsman, he will in madcap humour round up great flocks of sea-gulls on the coast, and will lash them merrily on with sleet and biting winds, driving them a score or so of miles inland, till some new whim takes him and he leaves them to seek their food on the unwonted grounds. Soon, with a gentler impishness, he sets adrift on a slow persistent wind myriads of tiny snowflakes. At first, so softly do they come pattering on one's face, they are hardly felt, but little by little they set one tingling and aching with their true bitter cold. Sweeping aside the snowflakes then, and opening the sky, he exults and laughs in the dazzling

radiance of sun, and white clouds, and silver-gleaming pools, and brilliant earth. Anon his mood changes again, and his aspect grows lowering. For whole long days he will have sombre skies, and gloomy air, and rain. But by the 20th he is once more joyful—there is in his eyes the love-light of approaching parentage. The dull clouds of his gloom are packed away into the far north-east, the skies grow blue, the sun-filled earth is a-throb with expectant joy, and soft ministering airs from the south-west hover to and fro. So the mystic birth of spring is at its season accomplished.

Thereafter March will linger for a while and play with his child; and many mad gambols will they have together. They will watch a great herd of cows troop out to pasture: forth-with they will be upon them, and will set them all running at the jog-trot, kicking, curvetting, stopping to smell things, butting one another, the stronger forcing the weaker back with locked horns, chivying one another to and fro in bulky skittishness. Amid such merry sports he will watch his little lass growing apace. Then, that

she may thrive the more, he will sweeten the earth and all the air with long cleansing rain. He will give her, as playthings and companions, the plumping buds, the fresh-opening flowers, and the birds that whistle and chatter and flute to one another. And so at the last, when his appointed hour is come and he must needs depart, he will again summon his mighty winged steeds, and with a sombre austerity go forth to join his great brotherhood of the months 'that are no more.'





PRIL has brought us days of sunshine holiday and many a fair blue sky. Larks have caroled merrily, buds have pushed on apace, and the grass has slowly turned to that green which is the very colour of hope, they say, and of fresh vitality. Out in the west, in the light of the forenoon, the long sloping banks of the spacious river-valley roll away into sapphire distances. As one stands on a low stone bridge, looking up the river, the dense woods on either hand are still brown; the wide-spreading water itself, as its rippling surface reflects the blue of the sky and the brown of the trunks and branches, is of a rich purple.

Yet in the midst of the month's first glamour and sunshine there lurks a spirit of mischief and of young forwardness. Cold winds run hither and thither, up and down the cross-roads and along the channels of streams. Alack for the man who, his youth left behind him, yet he fallen in sudden love with April, would fain enjoy her

golden humour—who looks to find an ever-smiling welcome from her, and knows not that fair winds oft prove but sorry cheats.¶ Such an one, sitting at ease in his dalliance, will find himself beguiled, and shrewdly answered and chilled, and will go painfully home, there to reconsider things. But ere long he will adjust himself to his facts. Seeing how, although she can smile divinely on her lovers one moment, the next she can lightly turn a freezing shoulder on them, he will decide that such wooing is work for ‘golden lads,’ and no longer the part for him. Henceforth he will watch the pretty maiden from a more detached standpoint. If he smiles, perhaps with a kind of quizzing geniality, at her sudden storms of tears, at her swift white angers when she dashes, broadcast over all her pretty flowers, the snow and the sleet, yet he will love to see how to these rash tempests there quickly succeeds her sunny



¶“ . . Fruitur credulus aurea;
Qui semper vacuum, semper amabilem
Sperat, nescius auræ
Fallacis.”



Fig. 2. - La Loma.

laughter again, so that the flowers are healed almost before they had felt the hurt. He will marvel at the inimitable delicacy of the green-woven raiment in which she decks herself, and at the ever-increasing wealth of the blossoms which, in field and garden, on all sides greet her progress and her growth. He will delight in the jocund abandon of her red and yellow tulips, in her six-starred daffodils, her scylla, daphne, periwinkle and her gentle primroses; and he will drink in with joy the wafted sweetness of her hyacinths. He will love too the ever-varied notes of her singing-choirs—their flutings, carolings, chucklings, croonings; their blithe chatterings, their chirpings, their gay whistlings. Her lawns and fields moreover, with the fresh green of the new grass pulsing to the eye like living water in the sunlight, will give recurrent gladness.

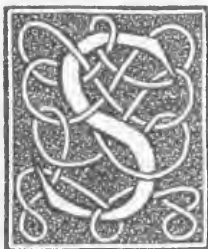
Farther and ever wider he sees her powers extend, till the boundaries and ramparts of her domain would seem to be only the horizon and its huge cloud-cliffs. These, like snow-clad mountains, stand sheer above

white vaporous seas, whilst yet other sunlit ranges roll away beyond his ken.

And at night? Perhaps it is in her later and serener aspects that he will find his chief joys of recollection after she is gone. He will recall how, walking in the darkness across the open moor, a throbbing star, many-coloured, held his eye. Soon the crescent moon rode free of the little intercepting clouds and shone clear and brilliant in the deep blue sky, making the lustre of all stars grow dim. A full sweet wind the while blew softly in his face out of the west.



MAY.



UNSHINE flooding the earth, green hedges infinitely decked with wildflowers, trees luminous with light-filled leaves, and hidden therein the tireless songsters of a thousand notes—such are the greater memories that May has left with us.

In the earlier part of the month, and in this northern plain, we had been glad, amid stitchwort and buttercup, eyebright and bedstraw and wild carrot, to welcome the tardy advent of cowslips and violets; we had listened with delight to thrush and blackbird and chaffinch in the scattered groves of trees, and had hailed the darting swallows once more; had sat, with legs a-dangle, on a plank bridge that spanned a quiet ford in a country lane, and had "lened and loked in the wateres" as they hurried over the moss-grown stones; and in a grassy field, where a rivulet spreads into a wide pool with sandy banks, had watched a white heifer in the sunshine, as she stood drinking.

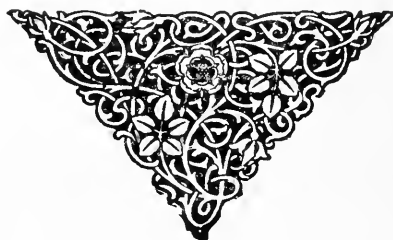
But a little later a more fruitful valley had been reached further south, where trees are crowded innumera- bly together, where in lanes and meadows earth sends up thronging wild flowers in spendthrift profusion, where there are fields deep with waving grass over which sun and wind play in long grey ripples. We scramble down into the river-bed and out on to a rock where one can just lie at ease, whilst the running water tugs at one's stick, as with tiny soft hands, to get it away. The eddies and currents among the stones go this way and that way and every way. Their restless surface is filled in the sunshine with darting gleams and wrinkles, like the face of an elfin thing, ever old and ever young; and their noise is like the sound of many memories. Then, going down stream, we come upon a long reach of smooth water with one rock up- standing. Just at our feet the blue sky is reflected, with a white cloud or so. But the trees at once close in, overarching the water, and the sun comes pouring down into their myriad leaves, saturating them with its rays till the light, in very superfluity as it

seems, wells out from them again, radiant and lovely and green. The living water pulses and glows in clear translucency of answering green, save that here and there it is crossed by the quiet grey-brown images of yet leafless ash-trees. Farther off, the surface is broken by some barrier of stones and rocks. There the trees have opened out a little, for the ruffled water again runs blue or grey-blue. Slowly over the pool the eye ranges, drinking deep of its beauty, searching in vain into the wonder of its living green light. Birds flit to and fro, here and there a fish leaps out, and on shore a rabbit pauses on a brown rock, then scurries out of sight.

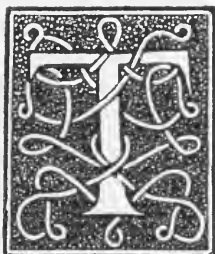
As the day wanes one hears, from a grove behind the house, the multitudinous evening melody of the birds; anon one smells the sweet odours of the night, and watches the bats darting to and fro.

The resplendent sunshine permeates and fills one, till grey skies again and fitful rain-showers are half welcomed. We tramp out over the bridge up the long steep hill, past a red stone-quarry and great banks of golden furze, till

the open moor with its far-reaching heather lies level before us. There, with the rain drifting against one's face, with the subtle aroma of the heather in our nostrils, and, in our ears, the solitary cry of curlew and lapwing, we recapture the remote and memorable joy of the uplands.



JUNE.



HE old fairy story of the Goose Girl tells how a princess set out with her maid to marry the prince of a neighbouring land. But on the way the maid forced the princess to change places with her, to put on unseemly clothes, to disfigure her face with dirt, and to hide her golden hair under a ragged hat. At the palace the maid was received in state, but the princess was sent out to herd geese. One day, however, a passing huntsman saw her sitting beside a lonely pool combing her hair, and with her face new washed. Amazed at her beauty he went and told the prince, who himself followed her the next morning, forcing his way secretly through many obstructions. And he too saw the golden wealth of her hair, and the beauty of her features; he saw the wild-rose fairness of her skin, and her eyes like two sapphires. They talked together for a while, and so he learnt that she, and no other, was the true princess. They laid their plans,

and then for the nonce they parted and went their ways, each glad at heart once more.

The beginning of June and the first young days of Summer were regal with sunshine and with the afterglow of May's radiance. Hawthorn and mayflower filled the air with their sweet perfume, and the long laburnum dripped "its honey of wild flame." But that golden splendour was veiled and all Summer's aspect grew dull and common and grey; and so the long days passed. Yet at length, as in a breathing space that she had taken, we saw a vision of sunlit beauty. We rode past rich hay-fields, green in the main, yet lighted up with golden buttercups, and sprinkled with sorrel and clover and brown grasses, and with a gleaming veil of wild carrot tossed haphazard over all; and we watched the play of the sunshine there and the pretty wantoning of the wind. There were wayside groves of trees, also, tempting one to linger in their cool undergrowth, or to lie in the shade and rest on the long grass at their feet. From the top of a slow-rising hill we looked down to the

far horizon, and at once the blue misty sapphire of it smote upon us and enthralled us, like strange sweet eyes.

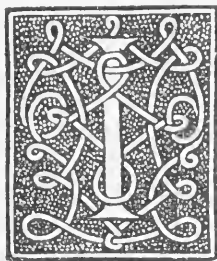
Things took on again their grey sombre hue. Rain fell fast and fell steadily, and no joy came nor any gleam of sunshine. Yet at least the parched earth was watered : "the geese," after all, were being well tended.

In us, however, that transient gleam of beauty had not been fruitless : we must search into the matter more deeply, and must find some perfect token of our Summer's birth. Through wind and rain, therefore, through dense dripping thickets and over miry banks, we made our way in quest of that sign, now clutching branches or tufts of long grass to confirm our slipping feet, now from perilous foothold leaping across some rivulet, or crossing a wider stream on a fallen tree-trunk, our feet first cleaned of treacherous mud on the long wet grass. Still hoping, still beguiled, we crouched past the serried thorns of great brambles, we were stung by nettles, till at last with a cry of

joyful recognition we found what we had sought—first the buds and then, close by, the full red and white flowers of the wild rose—that sweet and veritable seal of youthful summerhood. Then we knew that “all else was but seeming,” and that speedily the hidden glory of Summer must on all sides be radiantly revealed.



JULY.



N this mid-July I have taken a long journey, and leaving thunder and rain slowly behind have at last reached the south-western coast. If the journey was made tedious, at one stage after another, by the crowding and hustling of other travellers, barriers have at least been sufficiently interposed between customary work and this sun-filled region of tranquil holiday.

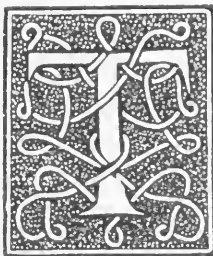
Here the sea is blue, blue—with purple stretches, green shallows, and long grey bands. As one looks over the water, the eye rests on the broken point of an adjacent islet, then goes clear to the horizon and the far Atlantic. Nearer in shore, gulls fly steadily this way and that, or float on the water's surface; and a white boat with rich brown sails moves slowly past. In the hot sunlight the sea, with its twinkling laughter, seems to live and breathe.

Inland, there are deep country lanes, twisting sharply to right and

left, to be explored. So narrow are they that there is bare passing-room for two carts; and they have tall hedges where rich sprays of honeysuckle may be gathered—yellow, white, and pink—and where wild roses linger. Soon an old church, with square ivy-clad tower, appears beside its quiet hamlet; or a ruined house, almost a tiny castle, whose thick grey walls and old arches rise from the undergrowth of dense brambles, and of nettles tall as a man; or again a lonely mansion, with its antique legend of a ghostly coach driven at midnight. So one roams on, now in the hot sunshine, now bathed in the cool shadow of the trees; and from overhead there come the cawing and chiding of the rooks.



AUGUST.



HERE was on the top of these high grey cliffs a gentle breeze off the land, which pleasantly cooled the sun's intensity. Down here at their foot we move along slowly, basking languorously in the great heat, pushing bare feet deep into the loose sand, grasping its grateful warmth. After a while the quiet lapping of the waves works its slow spell, and we must needs go bathing in the clear green waters. Then, cool and once more alert, we can enjoy the day's lingering sultriness, either in the shelter of these limestone caves, or indoors amongst the books, in some wide upper room that looks far over the sea's expanse. Gradually the evening comes, till at last the sun goes down. A pale moon rises from out of the waters. Her light waxes as the dusk slowly deepens; some faint reflection even can be caught on the ruffled surface. Steadily she gathers her full glory till, as unquestioned sovereign of the night, she spreads

athwart the dark waves a mighty
road of light from horizon to shore.
Here at our feet she has turned the
smoother water into living, rippling
moon-fire—a gift of lambent coolness
for the day's aftermath.

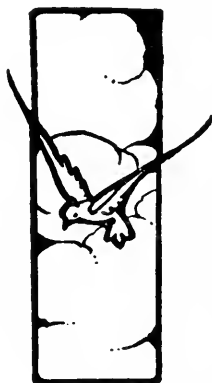


SEPTEMBER.



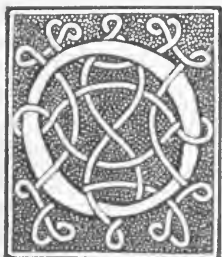
SI stood one afternoon on a hill-side near Limburg, a flock of starlings was sweeping to and fro somewhat low over the earth. One little bevy after another fell into place in their array, and as the numbers grew their flight took a wider range, now higher in the air, now lower. Still they swept hither and hither, all in silence as it seemed, and from point after point in the wide plain below fresh groups rose up and joined them. As they wheeled about in the air and turned in unison this way and that, they became now mere dots against the sky, and now a black full-spread army of birds. They would vanish into the remote distance, and then after a few minutes come streaming back with fresh re-inforcements. Meanwhile the little flocks went still flying by to reach the mighty throng, which swayed to and fro under the vast canopy of the heavens, first in a long broad band, then in the form of a hemisphere, and yet again in a

great sphere. Then the whole army would swing away once more out of sight, only to return anon with new auxiliaries, till the hundreds and the thousands had grown to their myriads. It was the most fascinating lilt and dance in the air—a great gathering of the clans ere the final flight to a resting-place.





W. H. H. H. H. H.



CTOBER has this year been warm, and the trees slow a-turning. Mists and heavy dews have been frequent, and the long grass lies drenched.

I went for a day or two to see a hermit-friend, away in the Arden country. He lives there in a cottage adjoining a farm-yard, deep in the gentle heart of Worcestershire. Betimes in the morning one is awakened by the cheery quacking and cackling of geese and ducks as they are let out from their quarters, and by the crowing of cocks; one falls asleep again, with a smile at their clamour, till at the coming of food the eager noise is renewed.

Out of doors there are trees on every side. The lanes—leisured, tree-fringed—go up green hills and down greener dales, and open out generously, to right and left, in road-side grass. On these grassy widths there be bushes filled with blackberries, and clumps of hedgeside growth which, though now they tempt no lingering, will yet, come summer's warmth again,

beguile our hermit into pleasant resting in cool shady nooks. By some grassy by-way, in parts boggy and of elusive foothold, we make our way down to the canal, then follow its slow stream and rich banks along, till the foot-path ends suddenly at a walled abrupt hill-side, into which the water disappears, dark and sombre, under a low archway. For two full miles, they say, it moves on there through the blackness of night. As we stand peering in, there emerges a train of silent, deep-laden barges from that mysterious underworld. But here, in the gladsome light again, horses and stout donkeys are at hand ; and so the whole line wins safely off, to enrich the distant town.

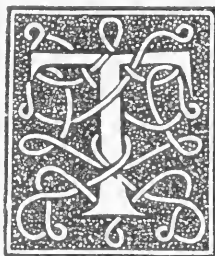
As the day wanes, sparse mists resume their wan dominion, and all grows grey. One is glad to get back to the warmth and light of the cottage—to the evening's talk, shared perhaps by a neighbour-friend, concerning poets old and new ; or maybe one is held listening, with keen responsive joy, to some tale from the poet-hermit's own epic of King Alfred—his high endurance and his swift great deeds.

So at last, when the moon is high, we go out into a big walled garden near by, where flowers and trees are seen dimly. As we walk to and fro, giant daisies loom up and confront us, and tall hollyhocks, or a hedge of lingering sweet-peas, or an apple-tree. Presently we open a door in the wall and look forth into still a new moonlight wonderland—a lovely grove of trees, some straight, others a-slant, rising all in a hush of silvery mist from their vague undergrowth.

Such memories as these—marking indeed autumn's progress, yet also, for us, arresting its decay—can one bring back from Arden, as from some far world of poesy.



NOVEMBER.



O come to the edge of this wide expanse of grass-land from the quiet street where we lived before is like the change from some peaceful backwater's margin to the top of a cliff fronting an arm of the green sea.

From this upper window we look northwards, on clear days, to a distant fringe of trees with a reddish huddle of houses beyond; but towards the north-west the grass runs free to the horizon—grass that is grey-green, almost dingy, in the duller November hours, but that is full of golden vitality when the sunlight sweeps across it. Sea-gulls and rooks are perpetually in sight, flying to and fro, or searching the ground for food. Cows are at graze, too, dotted over the land. One realizes the new-found spaciousness, also, as against the street's confinement, by watching the passers by. There they would appear, walk by, and disappear—and all was done. Yonder on the moor folk take form

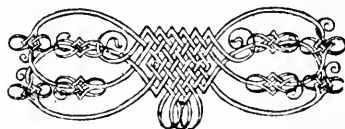
slowly, move gradually by, dwindle into mere dots—and we turn our eyes elsewhere. Even for horsemen, at the canter or gallop, there is no flashing by, no startling of the moor's expanse: they can only patiently, perhaps rather briskly, plod across it.

The winds that range across our prairie are, from north-east, through north, to south-west, searching, and clean, and sweet. From other quarters they come somewhat smoke-laden. But westerling winds prevail, and they, whether rough or gentle, afford regal breathing. Sometimes they are virile and exhilarating, like white, ice-cold wine; at other times they are filled with the smell of coming rain. In their rougher play they can give fine autumnal buffetings.

Out beyond the moor, heading towards Scotland, there runs the great north road. During the day it is hidden by the distant belt of trees; but at night its course is marked by a long sweep of lamps, between which the lighted cars run, pausing here and there, like little luminous ants. To tramp along it late at night for a mile or so, and then to strike off home-

wards across the moor's darkness—that is good. The grass, as the light from the road wanes, grows black and solitary under the sky's star-lit hemisphere ; distant yellow lamps make a horizon.

Of a truth this moor of ours, with its spaciousness, its free winds that blow from afar, and its silent canopy of stars, is to its familiar friends an abiding joy. It reminds one also how certain things, big-seeming in work-a-day life, can change when considered in a large perspective.



DECEMBER.



OW freezing a little, now relenting, December's mood hitherto has been inconstant, mutable, and of doubtful interpretation. For the most part we have been shown but a grey impenetrable atmosphere, though now and again golden gleams of strange beauty have briefly shone forth through the cloud-rifts. One is tempted to liken this last month of the year to some old-time sibyl, so full of ambiguity and mistiness have been her answers to those who would fain be weather-wise. We go down to the sea, hoping for some clearer manifestation there. We walk along the low cliff above the brown sands, we watch the grey edge of the water, we see and hear the little waves quietly breaking ; but beyond, all is murk and fog, and our hopes prove vain. Or, at some promise of a tawny-flaming sunset, we hasten to a bridge spanning the wide river, so as to capture the glory of the light and the clouds and the water in one great

sweep ; but still we are beguiled. The clouds edge together, the air grows misty again, a fine drizzle wets our faces, and presently the rain falls. Should we hear from others of sunrise splendours, we at least had no share in such a promise. If Madam December has smiled on them, to us she has given no sign, but has been of ever doubtful and baffling humour.

And as she will give no clear word of what is to come, so she obliterates and ignores the things that are bygone. We go to see a country farm-house that, a few short weeks ago, with its garden of noble flowers and its tall full trees, was a joy to look upon. All is now dead and sombre, and the trees are leafless and still. As well might that rich life, for what is left of it, have never been. 'T would appear that she is as reluctant to acknowledge the past as to foreshadow the future.

These last days it is true, since the new moon's coming, she has seemed a trifle more resolved. The fogs are slowly receding, the roads are become hard, ice-needles are forming on the little lakes near by, snow has fallen, lightly at first, then heavily: the open



O. Johnson, near Little London

land shows white against the grey-brown skies. At last, perchance, the grim compulsion to a clear utterance is upon her ; else why that set, unwonted pallor ? But who knows ? By to-morrow her aspect may have changed yet once again.

And after all if she, avowing no debts from the past, making no promise for the future, reveals to us only the actually present, we also, foregoing curiosity, abandoning old regrets, may confront her on the like understanding. The past we cannot change : the beauty of it and the pity of it are, in one sense at least, beyond our reach. The future is as yet not ours : only as it swings slowly into the present can we, according to our faculty, deal with it. And so whether, in the new year which December reveals not, there await us storm or calm, genial prosperity or chill adversity, we will meet what comes, so far as may be, with an untroubled alertness and with an 'equal mind.'

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